



**Realization in the Rough:
Reconciling Our Animal Instincts with the Spiritual Path**
with A.H. Almaas (Hameed Ali) and Karen Johnson
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Karen:

Hello, beautiful humans. Here I am. I was scrolling through all the beautiful faces and presences online here. It is great that we are able to be together in this way. Many of you are new to our work and are not familiar with how we put out our programs. You will learn a little bit about that today. But those of you who have been participants in our programs are aware that we select a theme for the year. The theme for this year is the instincts and how the instincts really are significant and important for us on our spiritual journey, but it also means understanding them, what they are, what it means to our behavior and what it means to our relationship to our spirituality. So, we are eager to bring this teaching in which we typically do not do until people really have moved through in the groups into their ego and peeled away a lot of the layers. But we feel it is so important for the way the world is today to understand how our instincts are affecting our behavior, especially on the global stage these days.

Also, some of you are here from the enneagram teachings and learned about the enneagram here with Russ and Sandra. Hameed is going to start off talking a little bit about the difference between our system and the enneagram so that there is a little bit of awareness of an overlap. There are some significant differences in how we enter into it and deal with them. So, I would like to hand it over to Hameed for the time being, and then we will launch into our usual dance, Hameed and I, of back and forth, and playing on each other's ideas and wisdom.

Hameed:

Starting with you wakes me up to the story at hand. One thing I want to say is that by instincts we mean how the biological force in the human organism manifest as what is called instinctual drives which are needed for life and living and survival and procreation, all of that. Many of us talk about instincts. In psychology, Freud called them instinctual drives. He focused mostly on the sexual drive and its distortion.

One thing I want to say is that all spiritual teachings deal with instincts and their effects on our experience and how they can become impediments to our realization or awakening. However, most teachings do not deal with the instincts directly. They deal with them with discipline, with aesthetic practices, with transcendence, but not by head-on exploration of what the instincts are, how they are affecting us, how they are impacting our experience, how they are maybe distorting, or how they can be used for the purposes of spiritualization.

That is not done usually. The only other teaching besides us that I am aware of that deals with the instincts directly is the teaching of the enneagram. Oscar Chiazo includes it in his teaching. However, the teaching of the enneagram these days at least, most people involved in the enneagram see it as a typology like there are nine types and each type is divided into three types depending on the three instincts. The preservation instinct is called the preservation or survival instinct, the sexual instinct, the social instinct. So, for each instinct distortion appears. The word that is given in the enneagram for instincts, each instinct has specific words and a dominant distorted expression that needs to be clarified or changed for liberation from what is called the fixated perspective of the type.

However, in this teaching we are not dealing with that. This work on the instinct does not use the enneagram. It is not really directly related to the enneagram although we work with the same three instincts. We call the preservation instinct the survival instinct. We have the sexual instinct and the social instinct. I think Oscar later on

in his teaching changed the sexual to something else and the way he uses that in his teaching. So, it is important for us. We do not just know about the instincts, read about them, know what are the words associated with them. We get into the marks about them, really explore how we feel them, how they manifest in our experience, how they affect our emotions, our thoughts, our actions, our life.

There are two things about instincts we work with here. The first is that the instinct is inherently an animal drive, an animal force, an expression of the life force for the animal life. The human being is an animal, basically an animal. So, the animal part makes them more primitive. They are not related to spirituality. They are more expressive of the life force for the purpose of survival and the continuation of the species. That is one level we work with. The other level is the distortion that happened to the instincts from early childhood, just like everything else is distorted as we know. The development of the self or the personality in a large part is the social, what we are, who we are. We develop an ego identity which is really not what we are but a distortion of our consciousness.

Direct work on the instincts is difficult to find anywhere else than this teaching. In fact, this teaching on the instincts is specific to this particular teaching that we call Diamond Approach. It is part of the Diamond Approach teaching. It is more direct work. It is not a matter of discipline, not matter of learning ethical or moral injunctions or things to live by. All of these are there, but that is not the point which is to understand. First feel them, experience them, how they appear, how they got distorted, what distorted them. Then feel them without distortion. Feel them in their raw, energetic level. Then that raw energetic level can develop and become refined and become aligned with our spiritual nature. As they become online with our spiritual nature, they can harmonize with what we call the enlightenment drive which is the fourth drive that develops after the instincts developed. Really the survival instinct is the first to emerge. As life forms then, of course, the sexual instinct and then the social are considered more later. So that is why mammals have some social instinct. Some birds do, of course, and dolphins and stuff like that.

But humans are the most developed, so we have societies, civilization, family, and all kinds of stuff. All the instincts developed in human beings, in humanity but, at the same time, they also retained their primitive character before we begin to develop spiritually. As they get distorted it becomes difficult to develop them and have them be more harmonized with our spiritual drive which meaning the drive toward realization and liberation and enlightenment which is the drive that can arise at some point.

Karen:

Something I would like to say about the whole question of the distortions. It sounds pejorative but in fact, like the ego is a distortion of something that is really true. Distortion here kind of implies that it should not be there, or we should transcend it or get over it. One of the things that we do in our work is we go into, for instance, our emotions, our distortions of some real truth, of a central aspect, something that is really attempting to come through. It is like allowing light to come through a diamond that has different occlusions, and maybe gummy dust on it or something. What we do in the Diamond Approach is we go into that dust and clarify it, see what it is so that the diamond can shine brighter. We go into the well-worn paths and open them up so that we can actually release the potential. The distortion is the clamping down and the suppression which is necessary for civilization. But it also has left us separated from the truth of that force.

Each different instinct has a seeking in it. When we are seeking from the perspective of our preservation, we need to have safety. We need to have shelter. We need to have comforts. We need to have food. All of these things are part of what it takes to survive as a human being. The sexual is the seeking of the procreation, to procreate for the survival of the species. The social brings in the whole mammalian force of bonding and seeking another to bond

with. It really gives rise to the potential for relationship and bonding with a group, one another, a society, a nationality. But all of these things are really in service of survival until we feel the seeking for spirituality, which is a way that the glimmer of the instincts are beginning to shine through and have us seek something that is much more in line and aligned. But what we tend to do is seek the spiritual and try to leave these instincts behind, rather than finding the way to allow them to fulfill themselves and open up to being in service of the spiritual drive. But the spiritual drive is the one that actually can develop and open up as Hameed was saying, but not to dismiss these as distorted and negative.

In fact, the distortions are the ways we see the world acting right now. We have playground politics. In other words, when you are in third grade, you have the bullies. You have the victims. You have the bystanders. You have the people trying to get in there and change stuff. It is very much the way children act and they are still in touch with that instinctual field. But we are bringing in the possibility of opening up to what the purity of the instincts are and fulfilling them, so that the real presence of that energy and force can come through in a way that brings wisdom, because Homo Sapiens was a name we gave ourselves meaning wise man. Very ambitious. It does not happen to very many people, but the fact that you are here means there is some interest in how can we act more wisely. How can we be really living up to what we are in the animal kingdom as wisdom seekers.

So that is the possibility and potential of seeing the distortions, not as something to dismiss, but as something that is ignorant. It is an ignorance and as we open that up, we can become more wise.

Hameed:

One thing I wanted to say is the story of this course. This is a different kind of online course we give here than usual. The course basically comes from a teaching I gave some years ago to our groups as part of the work of this path. It is a nine-day course in three-day segments spanning three years. Each segment works with one of the instincts. So, the course is really watching the actual teaching I was giving. It is rare to see what is happening within our school, to see the teaching itself. Usually, it is not public. So, this course makes public something that is usually inner, within the school. It shows actually the meditation practices. It shows the actual teachings, me giving the teaching to the students. It shows the inquiry practices we engage in, how to do it. Whoever will participate in this course will end up doing them and see how it actually works. That is how you get into that chemical laboratory and work on the chemical transformation. It shows the discussion and interaction between the students and the teachers. The student asking questions and sharing their experience, which is an important part actually on this course is to see the questions and comments session. How the students talk about their experience of what happens as they explore. That gives you an example of what is possible.

Karen:

We will also have questions and comments with you, and that will bring out more of the teaching, some updates, but also how to contextualize this really important piece of who we are in the world today. We are in such a mash of discord and difficulty and polarization, and really back into the tribal atmosphere of warfare and really identifying others and pushing away. It is all for the sake of survival. But at some point, human beings became a self-reflective sentient being that actually, it is more about survival of the self these days and our identification with nationality, with our own groupings, our own thinking, even our thoughts are weaponized. This is a very important way that our instincts show up. We do not have to dig deep into the psyche to start to get in touch with the way instincts are showing up for us: our aggression, our fear, our pain, and our response to pointing a finger at who caused it. Then what do we do with that? How do we get revenge?

All of this is very instinctual behavior that we need to be able to look into, deal with. Like Hameed was saying, the magic happens when you work the material. Just hearing the talk and thinking, oh this is really a great thing. This

is a great idea, and not working it. We simply do not get. We do not get the material to be able to go in, bring it out. I feel very adamant. I also am feeling the actual energy itself. It is a pulsing, throbbing, full kind of feeling, but that is just the beginning. The force that comes through is a force many of you might feel that makes you feel like, yes, I really want to be able to live as a real human being. We do not even know what that is yet. We have not evolved to the point of very many real humans in the world. We have a lot of people, and we have a lot of people who are seeking and that can be very spiritual.

What does it mean to be on the ground, in this world, in this body, in this animal cellular physicality and know our nature, be our nature, be that expanse coming through fully to really embody our being? We have to be able to deal with our instincts in a way that they live in harmony with the spirit. So, we are animals and angels, and there is something in between that incorporates both. That is a human being. That is what is significant and important about really working with this material, doing exercises together, participating.

I really want to encourage people, if you do the course, to really work the material and be in the material. But if you only are here today for being inspired to look into the instincts, that is a good thing. Look at the way your behavior is not in harmony with the environment, with others, where compassion is not coming when pain is there, where being grounded is not coming when you really need to follow through on something. All of these things will have an instinctual component that are making you react and respond in ways that are destructive rather than optimizing everybody's experience.

Hameed:

Our society acknowledges instinct, to use the word instinct. I know by instinct, like thoughts and expression, things like that. But, you know, without instincts really there is no life. A life expresses itself as what is called instinctual forces. They are powerful forces. Instincts are powerful forces. They are much more powerful actually than our emotions or our thoughts. They are really the bottom, the underground, the belly, you know. They are underlying forces of both the biological and psychological forces. They are naturally animal which means primitive. Their intention, their purpose is survival at all costs: survival of the individual and survival of the species and survival of your genes and stuff like that. So, they are primitive and then distorted mostly by how they become patterned through our childhood experience.

For animals, their instincts do not get distorted. For instance, when a tiger or a lion hunt and they get their prey, they do not keep hunting to get more and more. They have what they have for a while, until they get hungry again. Human beings make their first million and then the next thing is how do I make my second million. If I get my first billion, how do I become the biggest billionaire. It is endless. That is what we mean by distortion, because the instincts in themselves originally are primitive. They do not support spirituality in general but for them to mature and develop or become refined, it needs to be elaborated from the patterning of childhood experience, our interaction with our parents or our environment or our society that made those instinctual forces move into patterns that are not natural to them. It becomes like enjoying killing, for instance, like rape or incest. This is distorted instincts. I mean the actual sexual instinct does not do that by itself but when it is distorted, it can appear that way.

That is why Karen mentioned about the state of the world these days, the last ten or twenty years. It is becoming more primitive. So, the sexual force rather than openly expressing itself is instead being handled under the veneer of civilization. It is sort of exploding, revealing its underbelly and its underbelly is not great.

Karen:

And being idolized. One of the other things that I have been thinking about is that we have the opportunity to actually begin a process of looking into it and purifying it. This is not where most people are, where their interest is. They are finally feeling like they are letting it out and finally feeling righteous about these instinctual urges rather than actually questioning them. I do not actually anticipate that most of the world is really going to take the opportunity to look at the ways that their negativity is affecting others. But we here as a spiritual community, those of you who are really feeling the impact of these difficult and distorted ways that people are acting, that is an opportunity to evolve beyond it instead of devolve with it. It is a huge force of devolution that is happening, and we do have the opportunity to move beyond it, even in some small way, and support each other in doing that. It might not change the entire world, but it could at least give the opportunity for human beings to be born of this difficult time.

One thing we know about spiritual work is that it tends to have an upsurge during really difficult times. It is certainly not for everyone that that occurs like I was saying. However, for those who are taking this seriously and seeing the signs of destruction, there starts to be an activation of the seeking for something more than just for ourselves, more than just for greed, more than just for inflicting pain out of a righteous attitude, that some one deserves it because it was done to us. All of these kinds of behaviors are the ways in which human beings are actually creating a situation that is destructive and destroying each other, as you all know. But we do have the opportunity to really catch hold of that force and let it come through and seek something more deep, more real, to being an authentic glittering beautiful presence in the world. There is so much here that we can enjoy together instead of destroy together.

Actually, Gandhi said something about we are able to feed humanity's need but we cannot answer to humanity's greed, something like that. I am paraphrasing it. Greed is, in fact, what will destroy us. But what we are here to do is inspire that seeking drive to the point where you are no longer seeking it but being it. That is when that force takes hold and has a natural unfoldment and continues its way into the world. I really want that for everyone in the world. But you are here, and you have that opportunity.

Hameed:

It is interesting that this course is happening at this time. As Karen has pointed to, it is a time when it is much more needed than other times. But that does not mean we are doing it to save the world. We never think that our teaching or any spiritual teaching can save the world. The world cannot be saved that way. We are offering this course for the individuals who want to learn about themselves, who want to develop as a true human being, for those who want a true spiritual liberation because really these instincts, both their primitiveness and their distorted patterns are big impediments to spiritual development. For us to develop spiritually, we need to get our instincts in line, both relieve them of their distortions and then bring them along through the impact of spiritual presence so that they become more harmonized with the enlightenment drive or the true seeking which is the seeking of liberation. In time it becomes not just seeking, which is just a practice really, but a force, a power, a passion just like the instincts have.

In this course we will go through each instinct on its own. How it appears to us, how we experience it, how it got distorted in our own personal history, how it feels without distortion, the instinct itself. And what it is like, I mean it develops and gets refined and that way it becomes in the service of spiritual practice instead of an impediment both in its primitiveness and in its distorted patterns. All spiritual teachings recognize that. Here, in this course, there will be an explicit obvious way to see those distortions, how it is an impediment and how the instinctual drive develops, what is the instinctual aim, what is the instinctual force, and how it changes, and how this transform and becomes more refined as our spiritual realization matures and develops. So, there is an interplay

that happens between the instinctual, which are powerful forces, the most powerful forces in human beings much more powerful than our emotions, our mind. They actually pattern and direct our emotions and our thoughts. Many people talk about thoughts and concepts. Yes, true but most of your concepts are expressing powerful instinctual, primitive animal drives, and those need to be addressed. If you just deal with the thoughts, with the concepts and you have spiritual experiences but your behavior in the world will continue to express distortions.

Karen:

Just think about your strong opinions and what you do with them, how you are against other kinds of opinions that do not match. This is very tribal behavior and weaponizing your mind basically. It does not mean not having an opinion, but without space around it, without the ability to question one's own stance, without having an openness to other possibilities, to exchange, to enrichment of ideas, and really being able to grow with that. That is one of the ways that we can see our instincts are coming in and using the mind for self-survival, for our own echo chambers which is a word that is being used a lot these days. We want to hear and be supported for our own positions. This is a very kind of surface way we can identify some of this. Our reactivity emotionally is a way that our instinctual drives are coming through.

Fear drives us all the time, getting afraid. Fear in its purity is alertness, alert clear, identifying the threat, moving away, moving toward doing what you need to do. That is what fear can be. It is a clarity. It is open clear. There is tenseness but, in the animal, if you notice, the threat goes away. Notice your cat. They go into total relaxation. They are not going Oh, man, that was a really a hard experience and I have to really defend against it. I am going to put a camera here just to make sure. I am going to be watching it every moment. We hang on, we hold on, and that holding on is part of how we develop to deal with our instincts. We suppress them, which we needed to do. You do not raise your children to just be instinctual. That will not work. We are in a stage like ego develops to suppress those drives to be able to be civilized. But the civilization process can evolve. It does not have to stay stuck there. Ego does not have to stay stuck there.

If we really move into ego patterns and open it up, we can feel a way that a human being has a presence to it that can hold those drives and use them as nourishment to respond in the world, but not having to suppress them. Liberating those energies for life, for a full life is like we can be here in the world in a way that we make contact with it. And we really learn how to be a spiritual being by learning from our instincts, and that they have a place. We still need them. We need the alert signals. We need to know when there is a threat. We need to be able to react to that. The more we are in the moment, the more we are present the more those instincts emerge that enable us to have a natural, real complete response and not having to have them acted in every mode of life.

So, to liberate them does not mean that we are just going to be acting the way we are afraid we are going to act. If you are really spontaneous, most people feel like Oh, I am going to be liberated and spontaneous without dealing with the instincts. Your spontaneity is going to be hurtful sometimes, fun sometimes doing something awkward or strange, or even destructive. So, to harness them means that we can have the spontaneity of being not having to suppress anything. Our bodies can be alive and well. We can have the body as an instrument for our spirituality. We are going to actually be doing a course at the end of this instinct course on the body and spirituality. How instincts show up through our physicality and, as we are able to liberate them, bring in the elegance of our spiritual nature to move through our muscularity, our nervous system, and bring in the elegance of moving through the world and what it means to have the body in harmony rather than in tension. So, that is going to be something toward the end of what it means to really embody our spirituality and embody the animal nature as well. What that means when we are living according to that harmony, what it means to have a human body that is a spiritual body.

Hameed:

I was thinking of specific instances of expressions of distortion and how we express them in a bigger way than they need to be or minimize them. One of the biggest characteristics that happens to instincts is repression. For instance, the sexual instinct that Freud focused on is repression. We repress our sexual instinct, the need for a partner, the need for a mate, the need for pleasure. So, repression is a big thing, but even when we do not repress, it comes out as one of the distortions. Instead of having a loving and empathic and mutual enjoyment of each other, it becomes exploitation or sexual abuse, things like that. These are distortions. The survival instinct or the preservation instinct can appear as fear as Karen mentioned. Fear is survival, but to become anxious all the time, afraid all the time that is a distortion up to paranoia.

As a distortion of the survival instinct, it can also appear as aggression, as greed, as endless greed which has been known throughout the history of the human race. Greed is endless, completely and cannot be fulfilled. Aggression to defend oneself, you know, is needed. It is true. You need to be strong to protect yourself, defend yourself, but for aggression to killing and all that or hurting others that is a distortion, not understanding. The animalistic is not free. Then the social one, of course, there is either the dependency that can happen at the expense of oneself and one's development or the incapacity to relate to others or the sense of isolation that we end up having or feeling inadequate to relate or being antisocial. All these are distortions of the social instinct, while the true emergence of the social instinct as development becomes more a sense of natural bonding and connection.

The survival instinct becomes interesting, how that develops, what does it mean that the survival instinct is free. How does it manifest? What happens to our relationship to death? Because that is what survival is related to. So, our relationship to death changes just as our relationship to life changes. That is something we will get in more detail in the course itself. We are only giving you some general outline so that everybody knows what we are getting into, what the topic is, what the subject matter is, the overall package. We cannot give you details. It is nine days of two meetings a day of three hours each. That is the extent of the course. That is a long course. It has a lot of material and a lot of things, you know. I spent three days on each instinct with exercises and practices for individuals to do.

It is not just talks and teaching. No, there is an actual way to get to your own personal experience and expression of each instinct and how it appears. What made it that way? What can be done about it? How can you understand in a way that liberates it and if it is liberated, how it can be harmonized with our interest in our spiritualization, how it becomes an ally to spiritualization instead of an impediment to it, which is how most spiritual teachings look at instincts. There are impediments. Look at the Catholic Church, for instance, and the Christian Church. The sexual instinct is seen as sin basically.

Karen:

We have been taught to keep the animal in the cage. And becoming spiritual means walking away from the cage and pretending there is no animal in it. Here, we are inviting you to learn how to open that door. Let it out bit by bit, but also to see the ways in which that animal actually is very active in our life, because keeping a caged animal that actually really needs to be free to function correctly in ways that are optimizing and natural and real and good, is to break down the barriers to it rather than keeping it there and trying to manage it within the cage. So, it is liberating the animal nature within us, feeling that force coming through in a way that is healthy and really allows us to feel the health physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. The more will be liberated through these important modes of operating in the world.

So, it is really a course that is the beginning of opening that up meaning that you will get material in the course. But that is something you can work for a long time. It will help you identify behaviors, actions, ideas, beliefs about

yourself, about the world, about others and begin to question them. As we do that, allowing that force to liberate itself and allow that truth to come forward, be a truthful life, an authentic life and a healthy life.

Hameed:

Yes. I think it is good, as Karen mentioned, to see that by including the animal, we are also including the body in our spirituality. Good instincts are basically biological forces. It is like the belly of the soul, the belly of consciousness. It is the pelvis and the belly, in other words, which becomes for most human beings the dungeon where things are hidden, where cobwebs are, where it smells terrible, and do not want to get in there. It is scary or painful, or something like that. When we open up that dungeon to the fresh light, to the fresh air, the light shines in for understanding because really the instincts are not scary. They do not have to be distorted. They can be a beautiful expression of life. In fact, in this teaching we always say one of the points of this teaching is to be in the world but not of it. Not of it is to recognize our spiritual nature. To be in the world means to live our embodied personal life with all our instincts expressed. The survival instinct helps you to learn how to find work, how to survive, how to support yourself and your family, how to have the courage and the strength to assert yourself, to protect yourself. It becomes a support for having a spiritual life in the world.

Karen:

There are some traditions, actually, that do not accept you. In fact, in the old days the Sufis would make sure that your three instincts were fulfilled enough to take on a spiritual path, meaning that you have security and safety in your home, that you have a partner, you have family. You have relationships and have enough community. All of these things were prerequisites to getting into a spiritual teaching. We do not always have that luxury. We certainly do not expect everyone to have that, but it does make sense that when those things are more or less in place, or you have made peace with the fact that they are not and you are working with it, that enables us to have a spiritual practice that will help to liberate instead of having a spiritual practice in hopes that it will get us to the work, the family, the relationships.

So, we get a little topsy turvy around those things. The fact is that being in a spiritual practice can help those things to open up, that sometimes people find that in fact it does help them in their relationships. It does help them find work. In this day and age all of these things are coming in together. We cannot always wait until all of those things are satisfied but we can have a way of looking at them, of seeing what needs to happen. We can bring in an attitude that is more open, that is cleaner, that has more of a spiritual intention to those areas. That might help us to actually enable those instincts to feel more fulfilled because they are important parts of being in the world and in life. We need safety, security, home, relations, some way of relating in ways that are supportive and good through life's phases and difficulties.

The sexual is actually opening up into all kinds of things. That is a very interesting that is evolving in the world, polyamory and different genders, and all of that kind of thing. How do we look at that? And how do you engage with that? How do you learn about these new ways of sexuality and gender identification? What does that mean? And what is your relationship to that? These are all things that are going to be challenging to our instinctual nature in the sense of where am I in all of this? Where is my sense of what feels true for me? And really opening up the inquiry into lots of areas, getting into the dungeon, the cobwebs, all of that, bringing them into light. But then, what? How do they live? How do we live according to this opening and new possibilities showing up? It is exciting. I am looking forward to being with you in those questions and comments so that we can have more interaction. In fact, now seems like a good time to get some questions and see where you are at. What do you want? You can address one or the other of us, or just both.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Q&C 1

STUDENT:

This is such a gift. Thank you. My question is the desire or yearning or value of a loving, conscious long-term partnership that would fall under the social? And I would love to know some examples of what distortions of that might look like, or might be like, how that might manifest. or, conversely, how the purity of that might manifest, what that might look like.

Karen:

Big question. I think one of the things that is happening in the world today, especially in the USA, is the focus on relationships. I think they are developing in ways that people had not had before. The value of them is becoming more obvious. I think, when it takes over the entirety of your life, and the yearning for it starts to impact you in terms of getting depressed about not having it or not knowing how to get it and all of these kinds of things. That is an area of investigation of how are your relationships and how did that original bonding experience impact how your relationships are developing now, your friendships or partnerships. You know what your history of that is, and how that is patterned by the original bonding that you had with mother and father. Those early years have a great deal of patterning. So, the instinct there, the social instinct is a desire and drive toward that. But that drive can also be patterned, and we can find ourselves being disappointed. Finding someone, we constantly have to long for, because we cannot connect. How does that echo the original relationship? There is a lot there on bonding itself and looking at those patterns and how they kind of echo back into that. That is what I would urge you to look into.

Hameed:

Yes. But I think also that partnership includes all instincts, not just the social, because if you really have a partner, there is a sexuality there. I mean, without good sex it can be suspect, and frequently not satisfying, and it can be a source of all kinds of frustration, aggression, acting out, all kind of stuff. So, sexuality needs to be elaborated for each individual, how it is expressed in a dialectic sort of mutual way so that the sexual and the social become connected, become two sides of the same thing. There is a bonding that includes pleasure, enjoyment of pleasure together. But also, you know, partnership includes the survival instinct because of living together, working, supporting a family, supporting home life, all of that. That requires the capacity to be able to work and enjoy work, how to relate to your coworkers, and also to balance work life with family life, pleasure and enjoyment. All of those can happen.

So, partnership really brings in all the three instincts. All of them need somehow to not be actively suppressed but expressed in a natural way to support for both oneself and the other. That is what human beings really want, deeply desire. It is not always easy for human beings to have as you know. There are difficulties in all the three parts sometimes.

The partnership can be sort of difficult because one or two or three of those or one or the other. It could be the social thing. Somebody is distant. Somebody is withdrawn. Somebody does not speak up. Somebody, you know, is manipulative. That is a social thing. Then sexuality, can you really relate easily to each other in a way that you learn to express your desire and feel the pleasure without inhibition, without exploitation, and be sensitive to the each other so that giving each other pleasure is pleasurable in itself. That is quite a development, a refinement for a human being. When that happens, it becomes combined with the spiritual qualities, so the pleasure becomes the

ecstasy that spiritual people want to experience. The bliss that is experienced in the bedroom becomes a spiritual practice actually.

Karen:

Not just be in the bedroom. One little question really bleeds out into all kinds of things that you will have a chance to explore. Hameed brings in a good point. All the instincts for a human being are really interlaced. There is not just one that is independent of another, so they all go together for us. Thank you for your question. It was beautiful.

Q&C 2

STUDENT:

I am directing this to Hameed. When I die, could you compare what might be the experience on my part if I have or have not opened the channel of dialogue or communication between my head and heart and my animal soul?

Hameed:

One thing I teach is that the best preparation for death is the fulfilled life. I accept the good life, fulfilled life. A fulfilled life is not easy for a human being to have. Most human beings die unfulfilled. Because they are fulfilled, meaning there is no more that they want, they got everything full. All the instincts are fulfilled in a natural, healthy way without hurting others. Then it is easy to die because you have got everything. You do not hold on, need to hold on to anything. It is not like you need to stick around to get anything more, you know. That becomes really a good preparation for dying and then the dying process becomes easier, and death can be welcomed as the next stage of experience of life. Life does not end with death. You see, life expresses itself in the body through the three instincts, but life is not of the body. Life is of consciousness that comes into the body and vivifies it, makes it alive. After death, basically life leaving the body, life goes on in its journey with further experience. The instinctual life or the life in the body has given consciousness new kinds of experience, new modes of experience that are not possible without the physical body. So that development gives us more opportunity for experience, develops capacities, forms of communication that are very handy for the afterlife. Does that answer your question?

STUDENT:

It does. Could you name some features of my own death dialogue. If I am awake, alert, live in my death features of having reconciled or communicated are not having done so, and particularly not having done so, what is the concept -

Hameed:

If one of the drives is not fulfilled when the time of death comes, we feel sort of reluctant to go into it because something has not been fulfilled and it has not been finished. It feels like there is unfinished business and so regret and also you want to stick around so you have the opportunity to have that, because that is how the life force functions. You want to stick around. I mean some people when they are dying want to stick around. The body does not want to die. The body wants to live and part of the reason it wants to live is it wants to finish with its life purpose. It is true it is possible to die without complete fulfillment. Most people die without complete fulfillment. But I am saying the more fulfillment, the easier it is to transition.

STUDENT: Thank you.

Hameed: You are welcome.

Q&C 3

STUDENT:

I really appreciated the first question when you were talking about sex and the bedroom. It kind of felt alive to me that you were talking about that. I guess you know my question is about sex. I am curious about what you said about giving another person pleasure in the bedroom and that it can have a spiritual quality to it that maybe is just to be explored. Also, maybe something that I noticed about your book, *The Power of Divine Eros*, there is something in it which I feel you are alluding to talking about sex and kind of sexual tantra, but I do not really feel that you go into it. I noticed that that is not something that feels very available in our culture in talking about how, for example, if I am having sex with my partner, one moves from a kind of general sexual relationship where you are expanding sexual energy to having more what is called kind in the tantra culture a sexually tantric relationship when you might move that energy through your body. I am wondering whether you have any suggestions about that in terms of good sources or places to find teachings on that, or learning about that, or your own personal perspectives that you feel it is okay to share.

Karen:

I think, first of all, you are a very good source of that meaning. The more present you are in any activity, the more it liberates the energy to move in ways that are optimizing. So, learning about presence, learning about embodying presence, and the more that that is available, the more the act of being engaged with sex will naturally blend with presence in a way that there are not two different areas. There is not that instinctual drive alone. It is mixed with presence, with fullness and can morph and change and develop in the sexual act in a way that allows the spiritual essential qualities to express themselves. And it is not always one kind of way, but it is a development. Some people develop it as a practice. Some people just find that the more present they are, the more that happens. So, I think there are a lot of ways of looking at it. There are the traditional tantric methods.

In my experience being in the sex act as presence, knowing that is what I am that it cannot help but be a liberating experience, and open up to new possibilities. That is another thing that happens relationally for people who love each other, that the sex act is part of the fullness of the relationship, but also the spiritual relationship develops. Also, it is like a blend and a flow of the two becoming one fountain of liberated energy. I feel the practices are useful but what I have found is that it happens spontaneously for me. I know it is a possibility, but also any relationship and friendship without sex can also be a dialectic field that builds and develops and opens to new possibilities. Adding the sexual component gives it a whole other sphere of investigation and liberation. So, I think the Eros in life is a dialectic with groups, with all different kinds of things. But the sexual act itself is when the presence of who you are and what you are is in complete dance with the sexual energy that there really is one. So, becoming more present, more embodied actually will lead to that kind of possibility.

Hameed:

Even though the survival drive is the most powerful, the most basic, the sexual drive is very powerful, and it preoccupies human beings a lot. One thing I noticed is most people do not really fully know true sexuality, true sexual satisfaction. I remember my experience when I was younger. My sexual experience and my sexual orgasm, and my pleasure were very different from what happened later when spirituality became part of the sexuality. The spiritual presence and the pure consciousness and the qualities of love, and true inherent pleasure and satisfaction, stuff like that, can imbue the sexual interaction as well as the fact that there is no fear. There is no jealousy. There is no exploitation. There is no manipulation, just open, straightforward openness, straightforwardness. The presence of those qualities can make the sexual activity both easy and pleasurable and fulfilling in a way that most human beings do not really know.

So really, this course about the instincts is how to be in the fullness of being human because the human being basically has what Gurdjieff called three centers: the head, the heart, and the belly. The belly, the lower center, the body center is the most important energy. It is the instinctual energy. Movement is part of it. But the instinctual forces are important in it. To be a fully human beings, we need to integrate and develop the lower centers which involves in a large way liberating and developing our sexual drive which is very important for humanity. If you look at the news these days, you notice how many CEOs and politicians are resigning or leaving their posts because it has been found out that they are molesting or they are harassing somebody. All this is a distortion. It means they are not fulfilled in their sexual life. So that it appears in all kinds of odd ways.

Karen:

And priests and spiritual teachers. I mean it is all across the board everywhere. But Hameed you once said to me that a teacher told you, or somebody said, that there are two different kinds of practices that are very strong dealing with these energies. One is death practice, one is sexual practice, but he advises to do the death practice because it is easier. They have two kinds of yogas.

Hameed:

That is part of Buddhism. They have two kinds of yogas as the fastest way to enlightenment, death yoga or sexual tantra. They usually recommend the death yoga because it is easier. The sexual tantra is more difficult to do. I think it is true because of the power in it and energy and distortion and all that. But it is also a wonderful thing to live with and to liberate, and to live that kind of life. It makes our life fulfilled in the whole dimensions. Also, things about sexuality, that when I say most human beings do not really know, as we know, the more people mature, the more their sexuality and their social instincts become more developed, more mature. But part of maturation is not having less sex, it is more having a deeper, more profound sexuality that involves also the heart. Sexuality that involves the heart. So, the heart in combination with the sexual drive is what brings in the true ecstasy that is usually the point of the sexual tantra. Sexual tantra is how to use ecstasy to arrive at pure awareness. So sexual tantra, as Karen said, is considered more difficult and that is one reason actually why we have not taught it in this teaching. Although we have a teaching on sexual tantra, we have not taught it for various reasons, but that is one of them.

Karen: Thank you for your question.

STUDENT: Thank you.

Q&C 4

STUDENT:

I recently got a diagnosis of Atypical Parkinson. It is worse than Parkinson. The progression is quicker than Parkinson. You know I moved from California to North Carolina so I could hike but I cannot hike any more, I cannot bike, and I cannot do anything except swimming and walking. I noticed I have really been in this survival instinct. So, what would you recommend for me? What would you say to that?

Karen:

First of all, I feel very tender as you are speaking. I know that those kinds of diagnoses can be very, very difficult, frightening. I think having somebody who can be with you on the journey, who you love and who loves you, a guide of some sort is very helpful in moving through some of the difficulties that will be occurring. Do you have a partner?



STUDENT: No.

Karen: Well, maybe family and friends, community are important,

STUDENT: Not many friends here but community really in California that maybe can help out.

Karen:

That is great. Also, there are institutions that have support groups and things like that to help people through these difficulties who are really well versed in the kinds of things, the kinds of hurdles that you are going to be going through. It really means working with them as best you can. The fear and whatever kinds of emotions are there. That would be my suggestion to delve in. Use it the best you can to move into it with as much grace as possible by letting yourself feel all the different things, the anger and the fear and the pain and frustration and enjoy, being able to enjoy what you have left.

Hameed:

Parkinson basically creates limitations for life and dealing with the limitations, learning to live with them is not easy but it is possible. We do have students in the school who have Parkinson, who are living with it, and developing spiritually while living with it. Some of them have relationships and having sex. Sexuality can continue to develop. All these are possible even with Parkinson. But it is a difficult situation, so I wish you well in finding a good way to deal with it.

Karen: Thank you very much.

Q&C 5

STUDENT:

I am currently studying for a masters in Buddhism. The curiosity I have relates to the instincts in the sense that I am trying to understand why is it that, for example, in early historical Buddhism, Gotama Buddha said that it was better to leave the householder life and not engage with the instincts in that way. The reason I ask this question is because for me actually one of the things I love about this teaching, but I am also challenged by is the being in the world aspect. I think what I notice is a sort of aesthetic, more withdrawal tendency for many reasons. So, there was something that always appealed to me about that teaching of the renunciation but that is not my path. My path is this teaching. But I am curious to understand more. If either of you have insight about what is the benefit of that and why was Gotama talking about this.

Karen:

I think you dovetail with something that I meant to say earlier, too, which is that the theme in the school this year, the things that Hameed and I are teaching, has to do with actualization. The instincts are very much related in the sense that, without really embracing instincts and allowing them to evolve in a way that brings in more true expression of them in our social, relational sexual experience and home life, we cannot be in the world in a full way. To just go into transcendence and the spiritual realms that is an option. Many people feel drawn to that, the wish for that, to just feel freedom as outside of and witnessing of and really moving into those boundless, wonderful places which we also appreciate. But we value both sides of the human being. Not all paths have that same feeling about it. I mean, Gotama Buddha was a long time ago.

I think to separate from the world was something that was very important to bring that teaching as a spiritual teaching, to really be able to transcend it and really know of something that is far beyond anything that we know

and then to bring that back in is what we do. It is to not just live according to that transcendent experience, but to embody it, live it fulfilled and bring it back in some way here. So, it is actualization and living according to those truths are more difficult also. It is harder because you have to move through the layers of the ego in very specific ways, whereas the transcendence also takes a lot of discipline, a lot of regard for truth, for the willingness to go beyond these things. But it is a different path. It is a different way. It has its value.

Hameed:

So, about Buddhism and Buddha. First of all, Buddhism is a monastic kind of religion that developed when Buddha was teaching in a monastic way to monks and nuns. That is how Buddhism developed as a monastic discipline which means you leave life. But remember the story of Buddha. He did not start that way. He actually was married, and he had family, a beautiful wife, and he left it when he started experiencing what it was like out there in the world. So, he already had lived, you know, for some time the good life that many human beings aspired to. He was a prince and had more opportunities. He was married, and I do not know if he had kids or not, but you know he was happily married, and then he saw the suffering in the world. His compassion drove him actually to seek enlightenment. He was not doing it for himself. He was doing it for others. But he followed the monastic side. In the Indian tradition, most spirituality is a monastic one, not all of them. Also is in the Indian tradition, they have it that the spiritual life should be after the householder life. First you live as a householder, which means you live and you work, and you have family and all of that, and then you are ready for spiritual life. That is more the general principle.

Karen: Hameed, it sounds like what you mean is that those instincts were fulfilled prior to him engaging - basically, it sort of brings in the picture of that enlightenment drive begin activated. How it activated for him is seeing the suffering.

Hameed: I remember a story of Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche one of the great masters of Dzogchen of the last century. When he was doing his practice of nine or ten years of isolation in a cave practice which many of the Tibetan llamas are trained to do to become llamas. Basically, it is isolation and complete renunciation and just practice, you know, day and night within a cave with no human contact. He had two teachers who would check on him once in a while. They were supervising him. At some point he was getting sick, and he was getting weak, and all of that. They consulted with others and decided he needed to get married for him to survive, to live, to continue his practice. So, they got him a wife. The wife visited him in the cave and spent a night or two then she would go back home. So, it had to do with this sexual thing for him to be alive enough to continue his practice until he got his enlightenment. So that is a story to illustrate that all the instincts are needed even in a monastic life.

Karen: Many people do not think of marriage as a survival technique.

CLOSING

Karen: So, I think we are coming to the end of our time together. I just appreciate everybody being here. The course is really going to bring out more of the details, just like each of your questions does. It has been great to be with you, and I look forward to participating in the course on the questions and comments and having more opportunity.

Hameed: Yes. See you on the course.

Karen: Take care. Blessings to everyone. Wishing you good health and happiness this year, and hopefully, more harmony.